

# 5 PUBLIC & AGENCY COORDINATION

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Public and agency coordination for the Benning Road and Bridges Transportation Improvements Environmental Assessment (EA) was conducted for the project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. 300101 et seq.). This coordination served to help identify and resolve issues related to the proposed project. Federal and local agencies and the public were invited to review and comment on the project alternatives.

## 5.1 PUBLIC OUTREACH

The public was involved in an extensive public involvement process in 2012 as part of the *Benning Road Streetcar Extension Feasibility Study* (DDOT, 2013) and again in 2014 as part of the EA as described below.

### 5.1.1 PROJECT WEBSITE

In April 2014, a project website (<http://www.benningproject.com>) was launched to provide information on the project, NEPA and EA process, schedule, and to encourage interested parties to sign up for electronic updates and comment on the project. Following public meetings, meeting materials were posted online.

### 5.1.2 PROJECT NEWSLETTER

In September 2014, the project team distributed newsletters to Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners for ANCs 5D, 7C, 7D, 7E, and 7F, as well as Deanwood Civic Association, Deanwood Heights Main Streets, and Central Northeast Civic Association. The newsletter provided updates on the NEPA and Section 106 process, as well as information for upcoming public meeting milestones.

### 5.1.3 PUBLIC MEETING 1: PROJECT SCOPING

DDOT held the first public meeting from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm on April 22, 2014 at the Department of Employment Services (DOES) Building located at 4058 Minnesota Avenue, NE. The DOES Building is an accessible and centrally located facility within the project study area. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Introduce the Benning Road and Bridges Transportation Improvements project to the public;
- Discuss the NEPA and Section 106 process;
- Review findings on existing conditions (and alignments analyzed in the *Benning Road Streetcar Extension Feasibility Study*);
- Discuss and gather feedback on transportation issues and opportunities; and
- Gather input on the draft Purpose and Need.

During this 90 minute open house, attendees were given a four-page fold-over agenda that introduced the project, the project area, and provided a timeline for the NEPA Process and Section 106 Process.

There were 61 attendees who participated in the meeting. Written comment forms were available and representatives of the project team were available to answer questions at display boards. Public comments were recorded following the public meeting. Attendees communicated that there is a need for safety improvements at the intersection of Benning Road and Minnesota Avenue for all modes, suitable river crossings for pedestrians and bikes, congestion relief, commercial access, and neighborhood branding and conservation.

The meeting was advertised in the Washington Post Express and the Afro News, and flyers were distributed to community centers, churches, businesses, and at Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road Metrorail Stations. Email notifications were sent to Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners for ANCs 5D, 7C, 7D, 7E, and 7F, as well as Deanwood Civic Association, Deanwood Heights Main Streets, and Central Northeast Civic Association. Email notifications were also sent to 700 email addresses gathered from former DC Streetcar projects. Lastly, 5,000 postcard invitations were sent to residences and businesses in proximity to the project area by USPS Every Door Direct Mailing (EDDM) service, and 5,035 local phone numbers were contacted via Switch Board Communication Services to share the announcement.

Following the public meeting, DDOT prepared 15 preliminary alternatives to address issues and opportunities identified by the public.

#### 5.1.3.1 Title VI Statistics for Public Meeting 1

Title VI questionnaires were distributed at the sign-in table. Of the 61 attendees that attended the public meeting, 37 people completed the form. Below is a brief summary of Title VI questions and responses.

**Ward:**

- 83% Seven
- 10% Five
- 3% Three
- 3% One

**Gender:**

- 38% Male
- 62% Female

**General Race/ Ethnic Identification Categories (Please circle as many may apply):**

- 76% African American
- 17% Caucasian
- 3% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 3% Hispanic

**Age:**

- 59% Above 50 years
- 25% 36-50
- 16% 26-35

**Primary language spoken at home:**

- 92% English
- 8% Spanish

**How did you find out about this meeting? (Please circle all that apply):**

- 50% Flyer
- 19% Listserv/Blog
- 8% Project Website
- 8% Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC)
- 5% Other/Word of Mouth, Neighbor, Robocall
- 2% DDOT Website
- 2% Newspaper
- Other:** Project representatives

**How did you travel to this meeting? (Please circle all that apply):**

- 50% Car
- 28% Walked
- 11% Metrorail
- 5% Bus
- 5% Bicycle

**Did you find the meeting location to be accessible? (For purposes of location or disability):**

- 97% Yes
- 3% No (If no, please explain): "Need more posters to remind people."

## 5.1.4 PUBLIC MEETING 2: ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT

DDOT held a second public meeting from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm on May 28, 2014 at the DOES Building located at 4058 Minnesota Avenue, NE. The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Provide information about the NEPA and Section 106 process;
- Receive feedback on the 2040 No Build Alternative (review 3D simulation video);
- Receive feedback on strengths and weaknesses of 15 preliminary alternatives; and
- Receive feedback on Benning Road and Minnesota Avenue Intersection Improvements.

During this 90-minute open house, attendees were given a four-page fold-over agenda that described the project, and provided a timeline for the NEPA and Section 106 process.

There were 45 attendees who participated in the meeting. Written comment forms were available and representatives of the project team were available to answer questions by display boards. Public comments were recorded following the public meeting. Participants discussed transportation improvement concepts with DDOT staff on large roll-out maps and communicated a need for continuous multi-use paths where feasible, safe and efficient streetcar operations with other modes, alternatives that have a minimal impact on adjacent land uses, and pedestrian safety improvements along Benning Road at Minnesota Avenue and East Capitol Street.

The meeting was advertised in the Washington Post Express and the Afro News, and flyers were distributed to community centers, churches, businesses, and at Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road Metrorail Stations. Email notifications were sent to Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners for ANCs 5D, 7C, 7D, 7E, and 7F, as well as Deanwood Civic Association, Deanwood Heights Main Streets, and Central Northeast Civic Association. Email notifications were also sent to 770 email addresses gathered from former DC Streetcar projects and the first public meeting. Lastly, 6,200 postcard invitations were sent to residences and businesses in proximity to the project area by USPS Every Door Direct Mailing service, and 5,154 local phone numbers were contacted via Switch Board Communication Services.

Following the public meeting and agency coordination, DDOT prepared two Build Alternatives, in addition to the No Build Alternative, to be carried forward for additional detailed analysis in the EA. The Build Alternatives would include the extension of streetcar service from the eastern terminus of the H/Benning Streetcar Line to the Benning Road Metrorail Station.

### 5.1.4.1 Title VI Statistics for Public Meeting 2

Title VI questionnaires were distributed at the sign-in table. Of the 45 attendees that attended the meeting, 34 completed the form. Below is a brief summary of Title VI questions and responses.

**Ward:**

- 83% Seven
- 10% Five
- 3% Four
- 3% One

**Gender:**

- 47% Male
- 53% Female

**General Race/ Ethnic Identification Categories:**

- 71% African American
- 15% Caucasian
- 7% Other, All of the above
- 3% Asian/Pacific Islander
- 3% Other

**Age:**

- 59% Above 50 years
- 22% 36-50
- 16% 26-35
- 9% 18-25

**Primary language spoken at home:** 100% English

**How did you find out about this meeting? (Please circle all that apply):**

- 32% Flyer/Postcard Mailer
- 21% Listserv/Blog
- 12% Phone call/Robocall
- 12% Other/Word of Mouth
- 9% Project Website
- 9% Mail Chimp/Email
- 9% Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC)
- 9% DDOT Website
- 6% Television

**How did you travel to this meeting? (Please circle all that apply):**

- 56% Car
- 31% Walked
- 12% Metrorail
- 6% Bus

**Did you find the meeting location to be accessible? (For purposes of location or disability):**

- 94% Yes
- 6% No

### 5.1.5 PUBLIC HEARING

DDOT will hold a public hearing for the project in May 2016 when the EA is published for public review and comment.

## 5.2 AGENCY COORDINATION

Beginning in February 2014, FHWA and DDOT contacted District, regional and federal agencies to introduce the project to agency staff. Contact and meetings with agencies took place during the scoping of the project, the development of alternatives, the analyses for the EA, and the Section 106 process.

The scoping letter requesting comments on the proposed action was sent on February 18, 2014. An example of the scoping letter is provided in **Appendix L**. **Table 5-1** summarizes agency correspondence.

### 5.2.1 AGENCY MEETING 1: PROJECT SCOPING

The first agency meeting was held on March 4, 2014 at DDOT. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project to agency stakeholders and to review the federal laws and regulations that apply to the project. The Purpose and Need was presented, the project timeline was discussed, and an overview of the historic features and historic context of Benning Road and Bridges Transportation Improvements was provided.

The National Park Service (NPS) indicated a desire to protect Fort Mahan Park.

### 5.2.2 SECTION 106 CONSULTATION

Agency officials must provide the public with information about the project and its effect on historic properties and seek public comment. Agency officials may follow NEPA procedures for public involvement in order to comply with this aspect of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

**Table 5-1: Agency Coordination Summary**

Agency	Date and Purpose	Response
Department of Parks and Recreation	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
Department of Public Works	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
District Department of the Environment	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
District of Columbia Housing Authority	2/18/14 Scoping and Section 106 Initiation Letter from DDOT	None
District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	3/25/14 response from C. Andrew Lewis accepting invitation (see Appendix L)
Department of Housing and Community Development	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	3/11/14 response from Paul Walker (see Appendix L)
District of Columbia Office of Planning	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None

Agency	Date and Purpose	Response
DC Water and Sewer Authority	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
DC Fire and EMS Department	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
Office of United Communications	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
National Capital Planning Commission	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT 5/4/14 Invitation from DDOT to become a cooperating agency to the project	None
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
U.S. Department of Agriculture	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
U.S. Department of the Army, Corp of Engineers	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT 5/4/14 Invitation from DDOT to become a cooperating agency to the project	None
U.S. Commission of Fine Arts	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
U.S. Department of the Interior –National Park Service, National Capital Region	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT 5/4/14 Invitation from DDOT to become a cooperating agency to the project	None
U.S. Department of the Interior –National Park Service, National Capital Parks (East)	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service –Northeast (Region 5)	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency –Office of Environmental Programs (Region 3)	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority	2/18/14 Scoping Letter from DDOT	None

Source: Benning Road and Bridges Transportation Improvements EA Project Team

The Section 106 process provides a procedure to seek comment on and to discuss potential issues surrounding the historic buildings, structures, districts, landscapes, and potential archeological sites within and immediately adjacent to the study area. During the Section 106 consultation, the public must be involved as historic properties are identified and evaluated, adverse effects are assessed, and alternatives and modifications that could avoid or minimize adverse effects are being developed and discussed. **Table 5-2** summarizes Section 106 consultations and correspondence to date.

**Table 5-2: Section 106 Consultation Summary**

Date	From	To	Purpose
2/18/14	DDOT	DCSHPO	Informal Section 106 initiation letter and invitation from Clarence Dickerson.
3/25/14	DCSHPO	DDOT	Response from C. Andrew Lewis accepting invitation.
8/20/14	DCSHPO	DDOT	Comments on the Area of Potential Effect (APE) and potentially eligible historic properties for survey. Request to develop Determination of Eligibility (DOE) forms for historic properties.
3/16/15	FHWA	DCSHPO	Formal Section 106 initiation letter from Mike Hicks.
4/8/15	DCSHPO	DDOT	DCSHPO recommendations regarding the DOE forms.

Date	From	To	Purpose
8/25/15	FHWA	Consulting Parties	Invitation to participate as a Consulting Party.
In progress	FHWA	DCSHPO	Determination of "No Adverse Effect."

Source: Benning Road and Bridges Transportation Improvements EA Project Team

An invitation to participate in the project as a consulting party was sent to the following organizations (see **Appendix F** for copies of the correspondence):

- Groundwork Anacostia;
- Hillbrook Community Association;
- Friends of Kingman Park Civic Association;
- Langston Terrace Resident Council;
- Langston Terrace Housing Authority;
- Carver-Langston Terrace Civic Association;
- Washington East Foundation;
- Ward 7 Business Partnership;
- Capitol View Citizens Association;
- Central Northeast Civic Association;
- Marshall Heights Community Development Corporation;
- New Mt. Calvary Baptist Church;
- Ward Memorial AME Church;
- Benning Ridge Civic Association;
- Central Northeast Civic Association;
- The Committee of 100 on the Federal City;
- District of Columbia Preservation League;
- Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners for ANC 5D;
- Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners for ANC 7B;
- Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners for ANC 7C;
- Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners for ANC 7D;
- Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners for ANC 7E; and
- Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners for ANC 7F.